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ABSTRACT

Along with the expansion of adult education has come an increased awareness of the needs of adults for information on career development and on the role education can play in that development, and for assistance in locating the specific courses or curricula which meet their needs. This report is directed to policy-makers in Federal and state agencies who are interested in or who manage counseling and information services for adults. It reviews and examines "first generation" activities (i.e., the Learning Exchange, CATALYST) and identifies fruitful directions for next generation efforts. Three major topics are addressed: (1) the groups who are served by the projects and those who are not; (2) the kinds and sources of data used and the mechanisms and techniques for presenting and delivering information and counseling to the adult client; and (3) the financial viability of these services beyond initial agency funding. Finally, issues concerning the evaluation of these services are discussed. Recommendations for actions by Federal agencies are given and focus on: (1) the need for further research and development, (2) the directions which new project funding should take, and (3) the need for actions by Federal agencies beyond continuing financial support. (Author/DAG)

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CONFERENCE REPORT

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL COUNSELING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR ADULTS

APRIL 27 AND 28, 1976

ROSSLYN, VIRGINIA

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades there has been an impressive expansion in adult participation in education. In 1957 approximately eight million adults (less than 8 percent of the total adult population) participated on a part-time basis in some form of organized and structured education. By 1975, over 17 million (about 12 percent of the population) were involved in formal education. In the last six years, the number of participants has increased by over 30 percent.

Along with this expansion has come an increased awareness of the needs of adults for information on career development and on the role education can play in that development, and for assistance in locating the specific courses or curricula which meet their needs. The past several years have witnessed a growth in the number of projects and programs across the country aimed at serving the counseling and information needs of adults relating to education, careers and jobs.

These ongoing programs are richly varied in the particular groups they serve and the kinds of services which are provided. The Learning Exchange in Evanston, Illinois, for example, provides a service which links up those members of the community who wish to teach particular topics with others who are seeking instruction in a given area. Through an information system accessible by telephone, needs of potential "students" are matched with available instructors. Another example is CATALYST, which is a national network of resource centers which provide career information, techniques for self-guidance, and employment

assistance to women who are returning to complete their college education. At an altogether different level of complexity are a number of projects in which computerized systems are being developed which will provide counseling, education and job information to clients. Recently, the United States Department of Labor funded projects in eight states for the development of Occupation Information Systems to aid individuals to learn more about jobs, training requirements, and labor market conditions.

This document is the report on a workshop which was held in April of 1976 for the purpose of reviewing and reflecting on the experiences of these "first generation" activities and identifying the most fruitful directions for next generation efforts. Participants included individuals who are currently managing counseling and information projects, Federal agency project officers who deal with the funding of such projects, and other resource persons with expertise in specific aspects of adult needs, occupational information, counseling, and computerized information systems. A number of key Federal policy makers who deal with major Federal programs of support to adults in education also participated. The workshop was sponsored and supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, the National Institute of Education, and the University of Illinois.

Three major topics were addressed in the workshop. First, we discussed the clientele of the projects. We attempted to describe those groups who are served by the projects, and the similarities and the differences in needs among sub-groups within that total population. We also identified those groups of adults who have not been as well served by the projects. Secondly, we discussed the

projects themselves. This included an examination of the kinds and sources of data used, and the mechanisms and techniques for presenting and delivering information and counseling to the adult client. We addressed questions of outreach for these projects and the limitations and potentials of the computer as a tool for such outreach. We identified and documented the needs for a better understanding of the basic process of counseling the adult learner.

We next addressed the significant question of how to ensure the continuing financial viability of these services beyond initial agency funding. We are convinced that the needs for these services are extensive and that many of the projects have had significant success in meeting those needs. Many of the projects, however, represent new institutions which had not previously existed and which now must develop strategies to support the continuation of their work. Finally, we discussed questions and issues concerning the evaluation of these services, the data we had collected and the problems of doing satisfactory evaluations. Out of our conversations emerged recommendations for research and development, for further project funding, and for needed commitments by Federal agencies beyond the continuing support of R&D and pilot projects.

The purpose of the workshop was to generate discussion among a wide range of involved professionals and to identify issues for further exploration and study. It was hoped that insights obtained by those doing research in this area as well as by those running day-to-day projects would illuminate each other. This report is offered not as a formal analysis with extensive supporting documentation but as the summary record of a wide-ranging conversation on these

important topics. It is directed at policy-makers in Federal and state agencies who support or may support counseling and information services for adults, as well as at those who currently manage or who intend to manage similar projects. It is our hope that the workshop and this report will stimulate communication among various groups and will begin to establish a framework for the setting of future priorities for counseling and information services for adults.

The exploratory nature of this workshop suggests that the points of view and insights of others who did not participate in these discussions will also be of value to the agencies in formulating future priorities. The reader is urged to communicate with those of us in the Federal government and share his or her views on the issues discussed and, particularly, on the recommendations for future priorities of funding and policy.

As the organizers of the workshop, we would like to express our deep gratitude to our colleagues who helped us in that effort and to the participants who worked and struggled with us for the several days. They are a dedicated and competent group of professionals whose work is in an area of increasing importance to our society. That work should be encouraged and continued.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As described in the Introduction, the topics of discussion included the characteristics of the adults served by the projects, the nature of the projects, the use of data, the adult counseling process, the evaluation of projects, and strategies for ensuring continuation beyond initial funding. Within the discussion of each topic, an attempt was made to derive concrete recommendations for actions by Federal agencies. Those recommendations focus on the need for further research and development, on the directions which new project funding should take, and on the need for actions by Federal agencies beyond continuing financial support.

Recommendations for Further Research and Development

We recommend continuing and expanded support for projects intended:

1. To investigate what is wanted by the 90-97 percent of people who indicate that they are interested in adult education;

2. To study the transferability of specific occupational skills, their classification, and the existence or lack of existence of skill clusters;

3. To examine how adults perceive, select, utilize information in making career, job, and education decisions;

4. To assess the influence of the institutional setting on the relationship between counselor and client;

5. To systematize some of the schemes and approaches for verifying, validating, and making useable the various information resources for adult career and educational counseling;

6. To develop additional conceptualizations about the operations and effects of information/counseling agencies, and to utilize these frameworks in numerous studies of local projects;

7. To determine how local resources may be better tapped to establish these projects on a more permanent basis;

8. To explore the interaction between researchers and practitioners who deal with the counseling of adults and to find ways to bring them together more effectively;

9. To replicate earlier studies, to enable comparisons and detailed analyses of adult education participation by learner characteristics, delivery systems, sponsors, content areas.

Recommendations for New Projects

In the view of the participants, new project funding ought to include:

1. Projects to coordinate the accurate accumulation and standardization of career and educational information and to translate data into formats which are accessible and understandable to clients, counselors and useable by other programs;

2. Projects to continue to develop new, innovative delivery systems and mechanisms to provide information and counseling to adults;

3. Projects which try out, assess and eventually disseminate information about funding sources and strategies which help make new information/counseling projects self-supporting;

4. Projects which encourage information exchange and mutual technical assistance among new and existing information/counseling agencies.

Recommendation for Other Actions

For information and counseling services to adults, there is a need for Federal and state agencies to exert leadership beyond funding. Efforts are needed:

1. To provide direct technical assistance and support to projects concerning finances, management and evaluation;

2. To promote through the national media a broader public awareness of the offerings, objectives of information/counseling services for adults;

3. To mobilize further legislative support and awareness of career and educational information services and to convey to legislative bodies the mandate for support services to adult learners.

I. THE CLIENTELE OF INFORMATION AND COUNSELING SERVICES

What We Know About Our Adult Clients

In general terms, the total adult learner constituency can be readily identified and characterized. Various surveys, but most especially the tricennial survey published by the National Center for Educational Statistics, provide detailed data on adult participants in education. Yet, as conference participants discussed services, problems, and successes in an attempt to systematically portray what we had learned from our experiences and where certain important gaps still prevailed, it quickly became apparent that counseling and information services deal with an overwhelming variety of adult clients. Clients include people in various stages of their lives and careers, those about to enter the job market, those in transition, and those who are relatively settled but anxious to enrich other dimensions of their lives. Women entering or re-entering the job market, veterans seeking civilian employment, job-stale executives, minorities, those with technical skills requiring updating, pre-retirees, rural poor and prisoners were all part of the mix of clientele served by our respective agencies. When we address information needs and use, the need for outreach services, and the relationship of education and work for adults, more differences than similarities among our clientele emerge. "Adult learners" becomes a meaningful aggregation only when the similarities and differences in information needs among subgroups are understood and incorporated into the concept.

Adult Learners as a Constituency

Studies have shown us that as a group, potential adult learners represent a large population. In 1974, almost 40 percent of the

U.S. population over age 25 did not have a high school diploma; fewer than one/seventh had a college degree. Most adults are interested in some form of educational experience. Unfortunately, few participate. Studies were reported at the conference indicating that 90 to 97 percent of adults questioned had expressed a need or interest in adult education programs, yet only 12 percent of those eligible typically participate in such programs.

We also know that adult learners are not a vocal, identifiable constituency. They are not a visible interest group clamoring for programs and support. Needs are often undifferentiated and amorphous; no united front of consumers exists. Most often the evidence of need for services comes from data or responses to pilot projects and from educators and information/counseling providers rather than from any organized "group" of adults. Also, adults with the greatest needs often are in inaccessible areas; e.g., rural areas, the ghetto, and cannot or do not express their needs readily.

Finally, as a group, we know that adult learners typically are not tied into institutions where they can receive public monies or program benefits. Unlike children in the schools who can be "target recipients" of career education/life planning programs or information services, adults as a group are not as easily reached via typical institutional and administrative conduits for money and programs.

Similarities

The similarities are general, must be expressed as "tend-to's" and "often seem to be's." Observations by information/counseling project staffs and researchers point to these as some of the similarities and common characteristics held by adult learners:

1. Our clients wish to change their lives. They either directly experience dissatisfactions or feel vaguely uneasy that "things just aren't right," and seek to alter the conditions for these feelings of dissatisfaction.

2. Our clients evidence a certain lack of self-confidence, are often unrealistic about their own competencies and skills, and tend to under-estimate or over-estimate what their time and skill limitations will permit them to do.

3. Our clients frequently have poor information/inquiry skills, are generally not able to ask the most useful questions; they tend to be indirect, tentative.

4. Our clients tend to place high trust in personal level information, that gained from friends or informal sources. (This kind of information is, unfortunately, most often inaccurate.)

5. Our clients typically seek specific, concrete and local information which they can personalize and which they can act upon. Desires are for immediate and relevant information related to specific situations, at least in their first contacts.

6. Our clients seem to prefer anonymity, impersonality in first contacts before asking for help. They prefer to interact with impersonal sources of information before venturing into a more direct, personal encounter with an agency.

7. Our clients may resist information which we provide, particularly if it lies too far afield from their initial inquiries. They tend to make choices by eliminating or "de-selecting" information.

8. Our clients typically are not self-starters. They require substantial support and sustenance in receiving and interpreting educational and career information. Some require firm direction, step by step; others are locked into fixed plans of action; others are clear only about what they don't want to do. All must be helped to overcome inertia.

9. Our clients often are unaware of their own needs, are not conscious of deprivations and/or potentials, do not exercise vision for personal and economic betterment. Many do not apprehend what is available, possible. (We also know that missionary-like applications of our own value structures, the "I'll tell you what's good for you" syndrome, usually drives clients away. Facilitating individual growth cannot be perceived as forcing growth toward conformity.)

10. Our clients typically portray mixed feelings about education, often as a result of past bad experiences. They may be suspicious about colleges and universities--procedures, standards, behavior--yet they realize that such "schooling situations" can provide them with both the knowledge and the credentials which their personal vocational plans require.

11. Our clients tend to prefer neutral territory as a base from which to consider educational and personal planning. Information and counseling services which are perceived as recruitment programs for institutional, agency or staff self-interests, rather than client interests, usually are avoided.

12. Our clients have traditional expectations of education; they don't wish to be guinea pigs or pilot samples for avant-garde programs. Although we term them non-traditional students, they themselves tend to expect lectures, courses, grades and credits building toward standard degrees and credentials. Experimental programs often are viewed as not legitimate or bona-fide--marketable--education.

13. MOST IMPORTANT, our clients' ultimate motivations are linked to job and career concerns. As they enter counseling relationships and learning opportunities, job and career issues tend to predominate all other motivations, expectations and planning.

While some of these assertions can be supported by concrete data and research studies, others are more intuitional and based on the day-to-day experiences of those at the conference. Yet across the range of experiences and viewpoints represented at the conference, there was surprising unanimity in these observations of the needs and common characteristics of the adult learner and information user.

Differences

The differences among the adult learner population are almost uncountable. As we discussed our clientele with regard to needs assessment, program planning, services, outreach, and impact evaluation, the necessary key concept seemed to be "differentiation." It is imperative to consider group and individual differences, to see adults as comprised of a number of often overlapping sub-populations.

Which dimensions of difference have we found to be most meaningful? The major ones seem to be age, socio-economic status, sex, region, job-status and marital status, but there are numerous other sub-groups and distinctions within these categories. As one participant observed, "it would be foolish to design services to meet average needs; there is no such thing as an 'average need'." Another participant cautioned against trying to predict individuals' needs for service through "target population" classifications; any individual may run the gamut of service needs, and even his or her reasons for coming to an agency will vary, regardless of membership in a specific target group.

These differences--among groups, among individuals--make for differential appetites for and utilization of information, kinds of information desired, actions taken on information, styles of counseling relationships, counseling and referral techniques, and so forth. The caveat in dealing with adult clientele is that, despite some general patterns and "tend to's," adults represent a vast and variegated lot. The potential impacts of individual differences must always temper our perceptions of our clientele.

Future Populations

Several observations were made about characteristics of clients to come. The adult learner population in the future will be affected by a changing manpower and career mobility situation: an over-qualified work force will be looking for fewer available job openings. Since the bulge of population--the "Baby Boom" come of age--is at a stage where upward mobility is limited by a ceiling effect, future job mobility may become more and more horizontal, and jumps across career fields will become increasingly common. A greater emphasis on avocational and

"life-satisfactions" endeavors, rather than career growth, might also emerge. This will affect adults' interests and needs for recurrent education and information/counseling services.

What We Need To Know About Our Adult Clients

Discussion of our gaps in knowledge, our research and evaluation needs with respect to client characteristics, seemed to settle upon an unmapped territory: the "inside-the-head" workings of adults as they encounter and utilize information and counseling agencies' services and programs. We do have some ideas about how adult clients seek and utilize information for educational decision-making; our experience shows that we need to know far more. Among the things we need to know, expressed as questions for research, are:

Information.

1. Who needs what information when? Can groups with different levels of need for information about education and jobs be identified? Do they have unique or common information needs? What characteristics of personality, life-style, career pattern lead to information needs?

2. Why do people need information? What is the basis for the need? What drives and affects the expression of an individual's or a group's needs? Is it individual fulfillment? Economic betterment? Social-cultural progress? What is the evidence, the manifestation of needs for information; how are those needs expressed? Inferred? (And, an important corollary, who says a need is a need? Who determines whether it's a need, versus an interest, versus a demand?)

3. How do people get information? Where do they go, how do they get it? What do they do with it? How do people perceive, select, validate and act upon information and counseling? What are the operations and effects of information overload?

4. Can information-processing skills be learned? Taught? How can we help to develop in adults the capabilities for selection and discrimination, for establishing criteria for choosing among various sources and bits of information? How can we help adults to effectively manage information, to discuss utility and differences among sources, long after the counseling period?

5. What is the cause and effect relationship between information and behavior? A key and basic question: does acquisition of information lead to action and behavioral change or do certain behaviors and realizations of needs lead to acquisition of information? What is the balance?

Education and Work

What is the relationship between the requirements of a job and the requirements for education? What is the relationship between success in education for the adult and success in the world of work? How may we better establish linkages between work and education, and among the various sectors of the work world? That is, how do we develop work skills which are transferable, from job to job; how do we educate for job mobility?

Outreach

What is it that brings in clients? How are potential but reluctant clients reached? How do we deal with persons whom we could help who either resist participation or who are unaware of needs? How do we attract non-self-starters?

II. INFORMATION AND COUNSELING SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Workshop participants represented a variety of projects ranging from the national-level, computer-based Occupational Information Service (Department of Labor) to the local, community-oriented educational brokering agencies like WINNERS and the Regional Learning Service. Discussion on "what we know" about service centered on the characteristics and kinds of data needed by adults and on the effectiveness of given delivery systems, particularly the utilization of computers for information and counseling.

What We Know About Services:

Data Used in Counseling and Information Projects

1. Characteristics of useful data for educational and career counseling (information, statistics, projections); data must be verifiable, frequently up-dated, accurate and locally/regionally relevant. Career planning cannot be based on non-credible, unreliable, outdated or overly-general information. Clients suffer directly and the counseling agency image is damaged severely if "help" is based on mis-information.

2. Data must come from objective sources, preferably two or more sources. Often the originators of data unknowingly bias their data in terms of their own interests, orientations, sponsorship; e.g., manpower needs projections, college or university program descriptions, community resource information.

3. Data aggregation schemes must stress standardization, uniformity of data to permit cross-overs and the merging of various data sources. This helps to cut down duplication and repetition within data sources, and provides a common information discourse.

The Delivery of Information and Counseling to the Adult

1. Principal issue--interface. We know that the design of services and the logistics for information collection and dissemination are relatively simple matters. We probably have information sufficient for most adults, more than they might need. If anything, we suffer more from "overkill" than "underserve." The problems are getting adults directly in contact with the information, presenting it in a form which is useful to

adults, delivering it to where it will be most useful, and putting resources into the hands of counselors.

2. Outreach. We know we have poor geographical distribution, and great gaps in outreach to certain target populations. We know we need generalized information systems with many access points, working through many media, to deliver the great amount of information which we already have, much of which simply is not delivered and therefore not used to its best advantage.

3. Techniques. We know that at this point in time, the choice of a particular medium or system of delivery for information as an ideal mechanism probably would be premature. We simply do not know what kinds of media work best where, when, with whom, how, and why. Although computer-based systems have advantages, other means have been equally successful. It is too soon in terms of research and development to point to a "best" system; the field is too varied and multi-leveled for any one system to be notably superior in all settings.

Computers in Information and Counseling for Adult Learners

1. Advantages of computer-based systems.

   a. From the point of view of users: computers provide many access ports; have quick response/turnaround time; handle general population as well as specific sub-group needs; permit anonymity in initial steps of counseling relationship; require user to do something, to act; usually produce specific, concrete outputs, embody a "credible closure."

   b. From the point of view of information management: computers store and manipulate enormous amounts of data; can be readily up-dated; provide clear and consistent information flow; allow information to be codified, integrated, "massaged"; minimize duplication, redundancy of data.

   c. From the point of view of agency operations: computers free counselors from routine of data collection, updating, maintenance; can print inexpensive directories, manuals, hard copy; can provide statistics for reports, grant-writing, planning; can be used to monitor agency activities to detect emerging trends, new needs patterns for agency planning, futures forecasting.

2. Limitations of computer-based systems.

   a. From the point of view of clients: interaction with a terminal can be intimidating or too impersonal for some

users; certain hardware is limited in terms of ease of access, user-operability.

b. From the point of view of information dissemination: computer-coded information may be too bland, general, one-dimensional; may not have sufficient depth or branching of information.

c. From the point of view of agency: costs, both initial and operating, may be prohibitive; files updating may be costly in terms of professional personnel involved, range of information, utilization rates; writing of programs, software is a time-consuming, often-arcane specialized task which taxes staff, budget.

The principal limitations of computers arise from outside the technological system; hardware and system design are relatively straightforward. Problems arise from people and policies behind the systems, from information and data source limitations, policy decisions on file size, up-dates, fees, user-interaction, etc. The key issue is the person-machine interaction, not the equipment itself. This includes the input people (program writers, data sources) as well as users (clients and counselors).

A philosophical caution should be raised about educational counseling insofar as it is limited to education. We must avoid unconsciously promoting the notion that information and counseling services should only point people toward "education" as the solution to their problems. A cause and effect relationship between "education" and "betterment"--personal, economic or societal as defined by the client--may not exist. The view was expressed that when jobs and career are the primary concerns of the adult seeking further education, education becomes a subordinate means rather than an end. A number of the projects represented at the conference attempt to deal with this reality by combining job, career, and education counseling in one service, without imposing any hierarchy of values on the client.

What We Need To Know About Information and Counseling Services

The basic question of "what services work?" was not answered, nor could it be, by the Rosslyn Conference. Our time was too short, and participating projects were so varied that in-depth comparisons of program operations were impossible. What emerged, consequently, was a series of questions on procedures and techniques, and an identification of needs for "how-to" information on service design, resources, outreach, coordination and finances. Conferees indicated a need to further compare experiences and exchange information. In addition to the "how-to" issues, techniques for needs analysis and questions of job skills transferability emerged as other "need to know" areas.

Questions of Procedures and Techniques

Focusing on clients, the following questions were raised and, to some extent, discussed:

1. What services are needed by, and work best with, what kinds of clients? We need differentiated evaluation studies of sub-groups, various services and systems.

2. How do we best deliver our services--means and methods? How do we get adults into direct contact with information? We need to know about different effects of various delivery and outreach schemes on different clientele; e.g., direct delivery versus "indigenous dissemination" (word of mouth).

3. How do we set agency limits? How far should services go past information and counseling--financial assistance? social services? legal rights?

4. Once an agency is underway, how do we assess unmet needs, underserved populations? How do we redefine and redevelop agency roles?

5. How do we capture client interest, secure "sign-ups"? How do we attract reluctant clients or those unaware of needs? We need to share experiences on recruitment, outreach, marketing.

Issues were also raised concerning the data and information provided clients and the extent to which counseling services draw upon other resources of the community:

1. How do we engineer data-system crossovers, pooling, data compatibility? What are the mechanics of link-ups, coordination, standardization?

2. How do we validate information being distributed? How do we monitor the reliability of masses of data? How do we translate manpower data, labor statistics to local clients?

3. How do we broaden our information on careers? We need to be able to respond to clients' questions on careers, and their accompanying queries on occupational life-styles, work pace, duties, conditions, co-workers, etc., if they are to make career changes.

4. How do we mobilize non-institutional resources? How do we ferret out, recruit, involve, reward the community learning resources; e.g., the retired, professionals, craftspeople, others with skills to share?

How do we decide what to offer, determine what kinds of services are needed? What should guide our needs analysis: a "manpower" approach, emphasizing labor market analyses, consumer economics, or a "guidance and counseling" approach, emphasizing individual goals, personal development and well-being?

Finally, a concern was expressed about the trade-off between broad outreach versus in-depth services: do we need more services, should we continue to spread out, proliferate programs or should we improve present operations, serve fewer people better? What are the trade-offs, balances to be sought in promoting more agencies versus "better" agencies?

III. THE PROBLEM OF BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING

Major segments of discussion at the Rosslyn Conference were given to considering the future viability of information and counseling services. The key question raised was "after the seed money runs out, how do we support ourselves, how do we become self-sustaining agencies?" Crystallizing this concern was an awareness of the immediacy of the problem, some thoughts on possible strategies, and a great need to know what might work.

The Immediacy of the Problem

For most agencies represented at the Workshop, seed, start-up or soft money funding would run less than two years. We know we have a problem, and that we must face it soon. Public policy relative to adult education and lifelong learning is uncomfortably clear: support and development of such programs are not among the top national priorities. In a lukewarm political atmosphere and in times of lean economics, state and federal support for information/counseling services have been relatively restricted. Sources of income will have to include the private sector and community levels as well.

Kinds of Strategies to Employ

The hard reality presented by the question of continued existence led to the identification of a variety of strategies to accomplish that goal. These included:

1. Telling our story better. We must better describe what we do, better assess what our differential impacts are, better engage broad sources of support in our efforts.

2. Increasing utilization rates. We must heighten public awareness of information and counseling services, increase advertising and outreach, make more effective links with user populations.

3. Increasing cost-effectiveness. We must monitor and control internal costs more efficiently, learn "management" along with "development."

4. Mobilizing public support. We must encourage adults to express their support for lifelong learning programs directly to legislatures and funding sources, not only to the service agencies themselves.

5. Sharing our expertise. We must establish communication among agencies to share experiences, breakthroughs, expertise.

6. Planning to survive. We must include in initial proposals a long-range funding strategy. Some have suggested that federal funding be based on a phased reduction of funds over multiple-year contracts, like Labor's decreasing grants to the state Occupational Information Service units.

Progress Toward Self-Sufficiency by Community-Based Services

One group of agencies has taken steps toward becoming self-sustaining by developing support from regional and community resources. Educational brokering programs such as WINNERS, Regional Learning Service, Hudson Community College Commission, and the Alabama Open Learning Program have established links with local businesses, industries, social service agencies, government branches and educational institutions to garner on-going program support. They have thus been able to mobilize local energies and resources, tap into larger client pools and minimize dependence on single, short-term sources of income.

Educational brokers also have made progress toward self-sufficiency through self-help. A number of brokerage projects have established a clearinghouse for exchanging information and consulting expertise and for promoting broader awareness of brokering at the state and federal levels. This clearinghouse, the National Center for Educational Brokering, has developed workshops on financial support, consulting services and agency operations, and fosters inter-brokerage communications through their Bulletin and a publications service.

Finally, gaining support for information and counseling services is critically dependent upon the quality of services offered. Quality, in turn, is dependent upon the extent to which projects are informed of the results of ongoing research. Several conclusions were reached on the need for an ongoing linkage between practice and research.

1. Critical to any long-range stability strategy is the utilization of knowledge already at hand. The state of the art--expertise, concepts--in fields such as career development, adult learning and information systems is more advanced than our actual practices would suggest. We could be more viable if we better used extant research and practical knowledge as resources to each agency.

2. We also know that much of the research and evaluation literature is not systematized, not easily accessible to active project staffs; it is not always easy to keep current with the "knowledge industry."

3. Workshop participants underscored the crucial importance of greater interaction between social scientists and practitioners. We know that a valuable two-way interaction is possible: researchers can focus on specific information/counseling problems or issues of a generic nature, provide conceptualizations, synthesize scattered findings, while practitioners can provide bases for comparative data and empirical analyses, contacts in the field, and sites for testing and models; viz., the social scientists' "lab" setting.

What We Need To Know About Becoming Self-Sustaining

From the discussions on agency self-sufficiency, the question of "what do we need to know?" would appear to be either very easy or impossible to answer. Most participants' responses would be "Everything." We may know the parameters of the problem, and have some speculations on strategies, but we need to know results of their implementation. Some tentative steps have been taken--broadening bases of support, consortia, clearinghouses, etc.--but little else is known and few agencies are beyond the seed money stages. We need to keep track, beginning now, of the successful and unsuccessful efforts to become self-sustaining.

We also need to know how to foster interaction among researchers and practitioners, how to make knowledge available to projects quickly enough, in useable form, to be effective; how to link research efforts with on-going activities of information and counseling services. What are the mechanisms, the mutual rewards, the partnerships possible? In the words of one participant, "We need to be able to convey to each other some of the beauty of what we have wrought, even though we are not usually in close contact with each other."

IV. EVALUATION

Workshop participants indicated that, like the issue of self-sufficiency, a great urgency attends the matter of evaluation. Agencies and projects know that self-assessment is a sine qua non of their continuation. We know that we need evaluation to guide changes in our operations, to communicate our efforts and their impact to others, and to back up our campaigns to become self-sustaining. What we need to know, again like the self-sufficiency problem, is how-to; we need procedures and techniques.

What We Know About Evaluation

Evaluation must be multi-dimensional, not simply nose-counting or "cost per..." statements. Information and counseling services deal with multiple audiences, interests and agendas. Use of multiple criteria, qualitative indicators of performance, and subjective analyses all must be considered as we evaluate our many kinds of effects and outcomes.

At this point in time, intermediate criteria, the short-range indicators and proxy measures may be more important than the ultimate outcomes, "Big Picture" analyses. Utilization rates, referrals, job placements, etc., may be more meaningful to developing agencies than answers to deeper, larger questions about life changes, economic betterment, etc. Longitudinal studies should be attempted where possible, although short-term, operational evaluations are most critical at early stages.

Evaluation efforts probably should be mounted first at local levels. The smaller community-based agencies can serve as "test beds" where problems of criteria and measures can be highlighted,

the utility of information can be more quickly assessed, and data control and study designs are simplified.

One of the small sub-groups at the conference proposed a series of evaluation criteria relative to educational brokering agencies which are illustrative of the variety of performance indicators other types of information/counseling services might use. These include:

1. Information transfer--depth and breadth of clients' questions which the agency is able to answer; client satisfaction and action taken on information.
2. Range of referrals agency is able to make; depth of resources, amount of back-up referrals suggested.
3. Competencies developed in clients as result of agency contact, referrals.
4. Modifications in other institutions' and agencies' programs, procedures.
5. Level of consumer commitment; returns, spread.
6. Job changes, placements.
7. Degrees, credentials received; success in formal education.

What We Need to Know About Evaluation

Basic needs for agencies in the area of evaluation are procedures and techniques, designs and measures and comparisons to enable us to assess what we have been doing and what our impacts are.

How are operations, services evaluated? We need to know what kinds of services work where, with what kinds of people. Our clients are very heterogeneous in their needs and responses to specific services. The future development of highly effective projects will require detailed information on impact on the various subgroups of clientele.

How are costs assayed? We need to know how to derive cost figures, how to cost-out our effectiveness, sub-programs, payoffs. What are other "costs" besides monetary; e.g., missed opportunities, social

costs? The ultimate expansion of these services to large segments of the population will depend on our ability to adequately describe the actual costs involved in such expansion.

How is "success" determined? What are the ultimate and intermediate indicators of success? Conversely, how do we determine failure, if a program is not making it; how do we recommend discontinuation?

How do we develop larger concepts and principles for our operations through research and evaluation? How can we come to conceptual formulations; e.g., models of how adults learn, seek/drop/use information, how life changes/career shifts occur, etc.?

V. THE MESSAGE TO WASHINGTON: CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO FEDERAL AGENCIES

One of the purposes of the Rosslyn Conference was to develop a series of "concrete, specific and realistic recommendations" for projects and policies of Federal agencies in the adult education field. The two days of presentations, small group sessions and brainstorming were concluded with an open forum suggesting ideas for future projects and Federal agencies. We had talked about what we knew from our experiences and about what more we needed to know. To complete the circle, we concentrated on directions for future efforts, including research and development studies, targets for new project funding, Federal agency assistance to projects, and issues and concerns which we felt should be in the agencies' policy awareness.

Recommendations for Research and Development Studies

Practitioners and researchers concurred on a number of pressing research questions. As presented, these do not represent any order of priority, nor are they tightly-formulated inquiries. They represent major research objectives on which current knowledge needs to be analyzed for its relevance to practice and further investigations launched. There is a need:

1. To investigate what is wanted by the 90-97 percent of people who indicate that they are interested in adult education. What are they not getting now and why not? What are the factors involved in "participation"?

2. To study the transferability of specific occupational skills. How may they be classified? How may counselors aid clients' mobility in the labor market? Are there skills clusters which, when developed, substantially enhance the individual's mobility?

3. To examine how adults perceive, select, utilize information. How do different sub-groups learn, change life patterns, careers? What variables affect decision-making, planning,

taking action? What is the role of information about self, career opportunities, educational opportunities, etc., in their planning and decision-making?

4. To assess the influence of the institutional setting on the relationship between counselor and client. How is counselor image, behavior, effectiveness affected by institutional setting? What are the parameters and the effects of institutional "wariness" on the part of adult learners? What institutional settings are accepted or rejected by adults?

5. To systematize some of the schemes and approaches for verifying, validating, making useable the various information resources for adult career and educational counseling. How may pools, systems, sources of information be linked, coordinated? How may such information be put directly into the hands of counselors? How must it be analyzed and structured to make it useful to the client?

6. To develop additional conceptualizations about the operations and effects of information/counseling agencies, and to utilize these frameworks in numerous self-studies of local projects--while clients are still involved. How do services work; what differences do they make; what project successes are transferable?

7. To determine how local resources may be better tapped. How are people, time and money resources in the community mobilized? What are the successes and failures of local, grass-roots projects; what can they teach us?

8. To explore the interaction between researchers and practitioners. How might they be brought together more effectively; what have been the barriers? What are the characteristics of a mutually-benefiting relationship; how can each be aided while aiding the other?

9. To arrange for a replication of earlier studies, such as the Johnstone and Rivera Volunteers for Learning, now a decade old, to enable comparisons and detailed analyses of adult education participation relative to personal characteristics and interests, content area, form of delivery, sponsoring organizations.

Recommendations for New Project Funding

The needs for further development of programs and strategies of assistance to adults is substantial. In the view of the participants these include:

1. Project(s) to coordinate the accurate accumulation and standardization of career and educational information and to translate data into formats which are accessible and understandable to clients, counselors and useable by all other programs. Conceivably, this might include the production of low-cost directories of occupational and educational resources which are up-dated on a regular basis.

2. Project(s) to continue to develop new, innovative delivery systems and mechanisms. Although computerization appears to be an effective delivery/dissemination system, there may be new and possibly better and more cost-effective schemes worthy of development for specific purposes or clientele.

3. Project(s) to serve as multiplier or support agencies for assistance to new agencies, providing technical help with becoming self-sustaining. Information exchanges, visits from "home-grown" consultants, workshops on agency operations put on by such second-generation or multiplier agencies would utilize agency expertise to aid transition from seed money and to improve agency services.

4. Project(s) to specifically--and quickly--investigate funding structures and strategies. To explore successful models, develop new strategies, provide such information to existing agencies, and to advise federal agencies on future allocation patterns to promote agency self-sufficiency.

5. Project(s) to provide an information clearinghouse for all agencies dealing with information/counseling services for adults. Most project directors are not aware of other projects, past efforts and projects which have implications for their own. Enough projects exist now to justify a central organization for information and regular communications among active projects. There is less a need for an ERIC-like documents center than for more personal, direct exchanges among project staffs.

Recommendations for Efforts by Federal Agencies Beyond Funding

Funding agencies sometimes overlook functions other than providing direct financial support to programs. Often other activities can be critical to the ultimate success of projects which have been supported. For information and counseling services to adults, there is a need for agencies to make efforts:

1. To provide direct technical assistance and support to agencies concerning finances, management, evaluation. The cross-agency perspective of Federal agencies should permit making referrals, consultations, etc., among programs, as well as providing direct help.

2. To promote through the national media a broader public awareness of the offerings, objectives of information/counseling services for adults. Federal agencies should include in their publicity and broadcast agendas greater "consciousness-raising" efforts vis à vis education and career counseling and lifelong education.

3. To mobilize further legislative support and awareness of career and educational information services; to convey to legislative bodies the mandate for support services to adult learners.

4. To improve communication and coordination among Federal agencies which support these projects and whose policies impact adults and their further education. From the standpoint of the local projects it often appears that Federal agencies in the adult education area are working at cross-purposes, duplicating one another's efforts, and working in isolation from one another. Notwithstanding the constraints of their legislative and statutory mandates, the Federal agencies and the projects they support could benefit substantially from increased coordination provided by mechanisms such as this workshop.

A Final Comment on an Underlying Issue

There is substantial concern for the privacy and confidentiality of client information during counseling. As computer systems become more common and client loads increase, encroachments upon personal privacy are bound to increase. Project and agency staff must remain highly sensitive to the need for careful and explicit protection of the rights of the individual. Agency and project credibility--and ultimately the success of these efforts--will depend on this.

The strength of these projects is the basic underlying orientation to the client. The touchstone for projects should be the extent to which they facilitate growth for clients in a positive direction. To be emphasized are self-determination and individual self-worth, rather

than relationships which offer information and counsel in ways which place clients in a dependent position. Society and its needs will be most effectively met when the needs of the individual are considered first.

APPENDIX

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